fellowship of evangelical students

perspective

MCI(P) 047/03/2013
November / 2013

SPECIAL INSERT:
TRANSCRIPT OF TALK
BY CHRIS WRIGHT

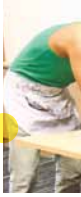
EVENT WITH
DR CHRISTOPHER
WRIGHT

WORLD STUDENT DAY

FES CW
BIG FAMILY GATHERING

FES IM COMBINED
STUDENT & ALUMNI CAMP

FES



World Student Day: Looking and Living Beyond Yourself

On 15 October 2013, Christian Fellowships (CFs) from across Singapore gathered to celebrate the annual International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES) event called *World Student Day (WSD)*. More than 150 students and staffworkers attended the half-day event that lasted from 9.30am to 2.30pm. Upon arrival, the participants were allocated into groups. Each group purposefully contained a mix of students from different campuses, nationalities, cultures, and even language groups to give them a chance to interact and build meaningful kingdom friendships.

Scriptural Illiteracy

The day started off with corporate worship and an insightful yet challenging time of sharing by our guest speaker, Dr Tan Lai Yong. The main activity for the day followed where the groups were each allocated to go to four themed rooms. In each room, the participants would learn about a social issue that Christian students in Singapore are facing or a country that IFES is involved in. They would then pray for themselves or others.

Personal Holiness

Apathy

Getting to know...

Country B

Cambodia

The activities and decorations were done by students from different campuses and each room promised a unique learning experience. Infectious laughter could be heard from some rooms while there was a quiet time of personal reflection and prayer in others.

The participants then returned to the auditorium to listen to a sharing by Zeng Hanyi, Chair of the National Student Council (NSC) and NUS Varsity Christian Fellowship (English). NSC consists of the Chairpersons of all 21 FES-affiliated student ministries in Singapore. Its vision is to be a prophetic presence to the various FES student ministries by discerning God's calling, reading the times, and acting accordingly in response to the different challenges faced. NSC played an integral role in conceptualising WSD and identified the social issues that CFs could explore as a Singapore CF community. The event ended with a love offering collection for the Philippines and a response song to God.

The WSD Committee comprised of five students from NUS, NTU, NP, and SIM. Planning began in September and in the natural, things were against us; time was short, we did not know each other prior to forming

Apathy
- **Have we become a holy huddle due to our self-centeredness?**
- **How can we extend our concern beyond ourselves?**

Vulnerable people
- **Who are the vulnerable people around us? How can we engage them as salt and light and bring the love of God to them?**

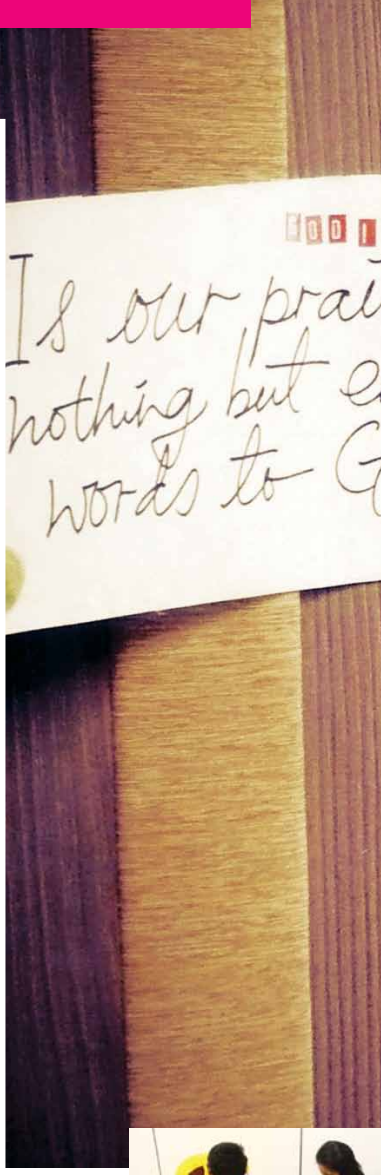
Scriptural illiteracy
- **Do we just do a surface reading of scripture, ignoring the context and deeper engagement with scripture?**
- **Do we only identify and read what we want to see in the text?**

Personal Holiness
- **Is there any idol in our lives?**
- **What does it mean to be holy?**

Countries, why countries?
- **What are the struggles and challenges of student work in Countries A and B? How can we pray for them?**

Photograph:
1. WSD committee: left to right, Lisman (FES General Secretary), Nicholas (NP CCF), Chloe (NP CF), Kezia (SIM ISCF), Shu Anne (NUS VCF), Adhi (NTU ISCF).

the Committee, we each had our own commitments, and we faced many challenges. However, one thing remained constant: God was good – and He will always be. By His grace, we worked well together despite our tight deadlines, school, and other CF commitments. The worst challenge we faced was trying to find a location. After three weeks and many (strangely) closed doors, we realised that this event needed much prayer against all the principalities that were holding us back. In His sovereignty and grace, God provided us with the auditorium and eight rooms that we needed in just one day! Hallelujah! We were also worried about the number of participants and helpers but the numbers kept increasing and we had abundant help! Praise the Lord! Whenever we needed something, God provided – and He did so in abundance. His fingerprints could be seen in every detail and His grace saw us through. It was also encouraging to see how God had blessed the participants through WSD and reminded them of the importance of praying for each other.



I decided to go for WSD because the idea of praying for others struck me. It isn't every day when we (friends and/or strangers) gather together to pray with others for others and WSD provided the platform to do just that. It was a timely reminder that this world is so much bigger than we can ever truly comprehend or perhaps even acknowledge, and that God's kingdom extends beyond the borders of our own country. It was also really nice to see students from different schools gather together to pray for a cause. – **Tan Jia Qi**, *NTU CF*

As the station master shared about student ministry in Country A, it reminded me that we should be very grateful for God's grace that allows us to be able to meet safely and comfortably here in Singapore. I was also reminded that we should be faithful to the Bible by digging deeper and learning about the context, intended readers and intended messages. – **Theo Ariandi**, *NTU ISCF*

I have been so blessed to be able to serve God in this event. Truly when we serve Him, we leave feeling that we have received so much more than we have given. I was

also reminded that when the body of Christ works together, Jesus Christ is glorified. Let us continue to pray for our brothers and sisters around the world for they need our prayers.

For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.
– Romans 11:36 (NKJV)

Teo Shu Anne / NUS, Sociology Year 2
/ Chair of WSD Committee

IFES

A Fellowship in Prayer

World Student Day 2013 was celebrated by many IFES student groups around the world. Here's what happened in some countries:

- **Senegal** held a prayer jog – groups ran together between prayer stations.
- **Rwanda** and **Nepal** both organised a day of fasting with prayer.
- Students in the **United States of America** went on prayer walks around their campuses, praying for the different communities represented there.
- In **Brazil**, one group divided into 11 small groups, each one responsible for praying for one of the IFES regions.
- **Lesotho** held an all-night prayer meeting.
- IFES **Netherlands** set up 24/7 prayer rooms, with staff and students signing up to pray in two hour blocks for their city, their country, and the world.
- Hundreds of students gathered in an **East Asian country** to pray for themselves and the needs of the world.
- **Puerto Rico** exchanged requests and prayed via Skype with **Chile** and **Colombia**.

A great wave of prayer has circled the globe.
But the day has passed. Now what?

We wait. We listen. We move on in faith. We trust that God has heard us and that he has much to teach us in his response to our prayers.

As IFES General Secretary, Daniel Bourdanné, has said in a recent blog post: *'World Student Day is a particular opportunity for us to listen – as individuals and as communities, both locally and as the global community of IFES. It is a time to hear what God is telling us about our mission and about implementing the work he has given us to do. May what we hear continue to shape our vision and direction.'*

Source: http://ifesworld.org/

1

Camp (In)Difference

James Cook University Singapore Christian Fellowship (JCUS CF) held our first camp from 24 to 27 September 2013 at Jubilee Church with about ten to twelve people in attendance. The CF intended to focus on the theme of making a difference in the world, which is why the motto, *Camp (In)Difference* was chosen – we are *(In)* the world to make a *Difference* and not be *Indifferent!* In line with the theme, we attended two talks by Dr Christopher Wright which really changed our mindset that mission does not necessarily mean travelling to another country. Mission starts at home ground, where we are right now and everyone is called to this. This is the whole duty that God meant when He wanted us to reach out, serve and love one another.

After attending the talks by Dr Wright, we wanted to apply what we had learnt. We dedicated one morning to volunteer at *Willing Hearts*, a non-profit organisation that prepares up to 3000 packets of food daily for the low income and needy families in every part of Singapore. We woke up early that morning with ready hearts to give and contribute with whatever we as young people can offer. Some of us helped to chop vegetables, some cleaned up dirty cabbages, while others helped pack food and despatch them. It was tiring to do that for six hours but the process was indeed eye-opening and heart-warming. I personally had the chance to be part of the despatch team, following the truck drivers deliver packet food to Serangoon. During the journey I managed to communicate with the drivers and was surprised to find out that most of them held full-time jobs. I realised that the team had a pilot, a businessman, a restaurant owner, and the list goes on. The next question I had in my heart to them was, "What are you doing here then?" And to my surprise, they took leave or closed their businesses regularly just to volunteer at *Willing Hearts*. I was overwhelmed by their humility, compassion for the needy and willingness to give without expecting anything in return. Our empty hearts returned overflowing with satisfaction that day.

2

We had our share of fun and bonding times through group games like water balloons, *Running Man*, and *Amazing Race* around Tiong Bahru! But *Camp (In)difference* was only complete because we managed to catch that call that God has given us: *to be that difference as a CF in JCUS and even around the world.* So during the last night of camp, the camp organisers decided to do a significant act up on Pearl's Hill nearby our campsite. At around 11 pm, we scattered, everywhere on the top of the hill, light sticks for our campers to hunt for. The mission was to search for 48 light sticks. Ten of us took about one hour to do so and then, we gathered to reflect on the game. Basically, the light represents us, and searching for the light on a top of a hill vividly describes Matthew 15:14-16:

> *"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."*

This is the whole mission of the CF: to shine *brighter* by serving *together* – as opposed to doing it alone as individuals, just like how light sticks glow brighter when bundled together. Our response to God was: *Have we been shining as that light for You? Have we been indifferent towards others? Have we made that difference in the lives of others?* As a young CF, we decided to spend that night calling out in prayer to our Father to help us build a CF that will shine His light even in the midst of darkness. Thank God for such a revelation to us! What an important message JCUS CF will carry in our hearts for as long as we serve Him.

Thank You, Lord!

Gail Yeo Li Yueh / JCUS, Bachelor of Psychology Year 4

Photographs:
1. At the end of the camp at Jubilee Church
2. The campers at the talk by Chris Wright
3. After a long morning at *Willing Hearts*.
4. Gail with other JCUS CFers at *Willing Hearts*. Storing the cabbages in the container freezer after cutting them.

3

4

It's so *heart* to be in your shoes

Combined Polytechnic Camp

Praying for Singapore

33 campers from the different polytechnic CFs (15 from NP, 10 from SP, 7 from TP and 1 from NYP) gathered at Aloha Changi Chalets from 30 September to 3 October for a combined polytechnic camp. This year the camp's theme is based on *'Missions'*, with particular emphasis on integral missions and how it can be lived out on campus and in society at large.

The camp committee came up with the slogan, *It's so HEART to be in your shoes* with a pun intended. The slogan attempts to illustrate that we need to have the 'heart' (love) to put ourselves in the shoes of others – to understand their culture and see things from their perspective – and at the same time recognise that it is 'hard' in reality to do so as many of us lack the empathy or are just plain indifferent.

Besides the theme talks by Pastor Raymond Fong, Ms Choo Jia Min from Operation Mobilisation and author of the book *Out of the Harbour* shared with the campers her testimony. Student leaders from NTU CF and VCF also paid a visit to share about the ministry on their respective campuses.

integral missions

Team Building

Scripture Reading during the Theme Talk

Reading a blog regarding issues faced on campuses such as bullying

Team Building

Sharing by NTU CF and VCF student leaders

lack the empathy or are just plain indifferent

Pastor Raymond Fong

Ms Choo Jia Min

Singspiration Time

A NAFA CF gathering at the home of staffworker Fuji on 9 September

VOICES

Voices. All the different voices came together, by the different children of His. All simply wanted to worship and sing. Isaiah 53 was shared by staffworker Fuji, after we sang *Jesus, Beautiful Saviour.* Jesus 'had no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him, nothing in His appearance that we should desire Him, He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering' (Isa.53:3). The Bible passage reminds us that we were drawn to worship Jesus because of His amazing love. *NAFA CFers sang in total abandonment to the Lord. Musicians, pianists, composers; each child was gifted. We were reminded to look to the Giver and not just to the gift of music. It is about our Lord.

Voices. NAFA CF ... We just sang. It was **powerful**. Sitting down in the midst of the beautiful voices; high keys, low keys offered up to Him. Tears fell. I was healing. I was drawn.

Voices. Prayers. We surrounded a girl to pray for her and her family. Hands held. Knees bowed. We surrounded the staffworkers. We prayed. We began the gathering in prayer: 'may we encourage one another and may the words we say please our Lord'; and ended the night in prayer. God, give me strength to continue to be salt and light through the fellowship.

*Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts Christian Fellowship (NAFA CF) is a pioneering ministry of FES.

Lin Wei / FES Staffworker

Food for Thought

What's going on here?
Sometimes I'm asked in classes, "What kind of music do you like?" And I refuse to answer ...

I think Christians need to learn – if they're really interested in engaging culture, they need to learn to ask a subtler question, which is: "What's going on here?"

Why is this person doing this writing, performing, whatever? Why are people buying this, listening to it, whatever? What's happening when they consume this music? ...

... we need to challenge each other on Christian terms, to say, "Christianly, what can we learn about the gospel or the Christian worldview from this music?"

Jeremy Begbie, in an interview with ***Faith & Leadership.*** (See http://www.faithandleadership.com/multimedia/jeremy-begbie-what-can-we-learn-about-the-gospel-music)

Different campuses but one *common mission*

The FES Chinese Work held its annual *Big Family Gathering* on 18 October at Church of the Good Shepherd. Approximately 133 people comprising of alumni, students and staff attended this event.

The programme for the evening included a sharing by two Chinese VCF graduates: Pastor Ang Chee Yong and Pastor Tan Yan Yee, who both recently completed their seminary degrees at Trinity Theological College, Singapore. The sharing centered on the role of the campus Christian Fellowship (CF) in shaping worldviews, moulding values and fostering faith in God. It depicts a life journey that begins with a pursuit for one's own interests, to one that is willing to risk it all for Christ.

Besides catching up with each other, the gathering also provided an opportunity for the students to interact with graduates as well as give updates on the ministry on campus.

An unexpected downpour also helped to lengthen the post-event refreshment time, thus allowing for more in-depth sharing and interaction. Indeed, it was heartening to also witness commendable acts of service among those who had cars. It was reported that some took several to and fro trips to ferry all those stranded to the nearest MRT station. And some even went the extra mile to drive them home.

> *And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward. – Matthew 10:42*

We continue to pray that the Holy Spirit will work mightily in the hearts of students and alumni so that as one body we can magnify His love and glory on our campuses and in the marketplace.

Jackson Lum Guan Ting / FES staffworker (Chinese Work)

Take Your Candle and Light Your World

Igniting Spirit, Impacting Society

Indonesian Ministry Combined Camp

'Thank you ISCF for your presence and guidance. Without ISCF I may not be a Christian now. Keep the fire going, thank you for your ministry!'

This was one of the memos written by students and graduates at the end of the FES Indonesian Ministry (IM) Combined Student and Alumni Camp, which was held from 7 to 10 August 2013. 80 participants attended the Camp, comprising generations of God's children, from the start of NTU Indonesian Students' Christian Fellowship (ISCF) 15 years ago to the present.

We were privileged to have Mr Petrus Budi Setyawan, our former FESIM staffworker – who was very involved in pioneering ISCF in 1998 – to expound the Word of God to us. With the theme *Igniting Spirit, Impacting Society,* we were brought back to examine our spiritual life: Have we forgotten our first love, are we still following God wholeheartedly, and are we still staying focused in our vision and ministry? Together, we reflected on the characteristics from the seven churches described in the book of Revelations. The various workshops, discussions and Q&A sessions helped us to review our current ministry and sharpen our vision. This was indeed timely as we celebrate the 15th Anniversary of ISCF and 10th Anniversary of FESIM.

Before each Bible exposition, we listened to the sharing from various campus ministries and also from the FESIM Working Committee. The camp participants also had the opportunity to get to know friends from different cohorts and different campuses through their small groups.

Through this Camp, the fire of the ministry God has placed before us on campus and in the marketplace was rekindled. The memo that was written at the beginning served as a reminder to us of the reason FESIM exists and the vision God has entrusted the student ministry with, that is, to win students for Christ and to make disciples.

God will always be with us and never leave us to work alone – a fact that has been witnessed through these 15 years of ministry.

Kristo Kuntadi / NTU, Electrical Engineering, PhD Candidate

The speaker, Mr Petrus Budi Setyawan

IFES EARC 2014

AWESOME GOD, E.P.I.C GENERATION

[E.P.I.C. = ENGAGING, PASSIONATE, INCARNATIONAL, CHRIST-LIKE]

EARC 2014

The **EAST ASIA REGIONAL CONFERENCE** (EARC) is a triennial Christian student conference organised by International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES), East Asia. EARC 2014 will be held from

2-8 JULY 2014 at

PORT DICKSON METHODIST CENTRE, MALAYSIA

East Asia is one of the most fast-changing and rapidly growing regions economically, socially and influentially. With these changes, a lot of other things come knocking on our doors, seeking our attention and our redress.

Do we have our hands on the pulse of things?

For more information on EARC 2014, go to: http://ifesearc2014.org/

For students who are interested to attend EARC 2014, please contact your CF staffworker or FES staffworker Adrian Nugroho (adrian.nugroho@fessingapore.org) who is the representative for the Singapore participants of EARC 2014.

IFES EARC 2014

AWESOME GOD E.P.I.C GENERATION

Challenging Work Place, Challenging Times

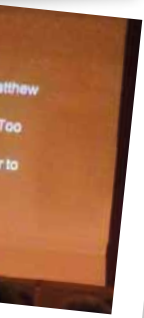
From 2 to 6 August, the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES) East Asia Graduate Conference (EAGC) 2013 was held at Bayu Beach Resort, Port Dickson, Malaysia. The conference had the theme, *Challenging Work Place, Challenging Times* and featured Paul Stevens as the theme speaker. Chan Sook Ching, Senior Staffworker with the FES Chinese Work, attended EAGC with some of the graduates she works with. She shares with us some of her thoughts on the conference.

The first time I attended the EAGC was nine years ago in 2004, where it was held in Bali. I thank God that for this EAGC, I was able to attend it together with three alumni members.

I am also thankful to God that I had learned much from Professor Stevens during the conference — through the theme talks and plenary sessions — to look from a kingdom perspective at work and business, especially the integration of faith and life. His sharing helps me not only in reinforcing my thoughts, but also in my direction and focus when serving among the graduates.

Besides the theme talks and plenary sessions, the small group sharing was also what I enjoyed most. It was a life-connecting and engaging time. I am grateful to God for my small group members who opened up about their life, their struggles, or their problems in the workplace. Their openness enabled the group to really connect our lives in Christ together, through attentive

Photograph Below
From left to right: Chew Mingyuan (NUS graduate 2009), Kong Ling Fang (NUS graduate 2008), Goh Sin Tee (NTU graduate 2013) and Sook Ching (staffworker).



listening, as well as responsible, edifying feedback and prayer. Helped by our 'e-generation' devices, we still stay connected via Facebook and emails. Even though we have all parted ways after the conference and went back to our respective countries and workplaces, the networking and fellowship in Christ remain.

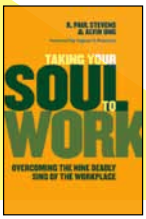
In addition, I want to thank God and the conference committee for bringing in good speakers for the workshop sessions. Besides presenting the topic, the speakers also shared about their lives, their struggles, how they wait before God in making decisions and how they see God's guidance in the midst of all these. The testimonies and encouraging real-life examples edified all those who listened.

EAGC

East Asia Graduates Conference

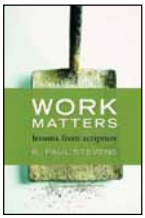
I thank God for what I have learnt, and have been reminded of through the EAGC speakers. My prayer is that these will also serve as reminders to our alumni and to the graduates that I am serving, that our lives are living testimonies to be seen and watched by the people all around us, especially by those who work closely with us in the marketplace. The Kingdom can be seen by others and become attractive to them when we do our part as faithful stewards. I hope these reminders can be heard by more graduates. I pray that for the next EAGC in 2016, more alumni from the Chinese Work will make an effort to attend the conference so that their lives can be blessed in the process.

Chan Sook Ching / FES Senior Staffworker (Chinese Work)



For Further Reading

Taking Your Soul to Work
Overcoming the Nine Deadly Sins of the Workplace
By R. Paul Stevens
and Alvin Ung
(Wm.B.Eerdmans 2010)



Work Matters
Lessons from Scripture
By R. Paul Stevens
(Wm.B.Eerdmans 2012)

Go to http://www.eerdmans.com/ for more information on these titles.

Event with Dr Christopher J.H. Wright

On 25 and 26 September 2013, FES hosted an event consisting of two public talks, a theological consultation and a missions consultation (jointly organised with Overseas Missionary Fellowship) with Dr Christopher J. H. Wright, International Ministries Director of Langham Partnership. Held at St Andrew's Cathedral, both the talks and consultations had an attendance of about 730 people and 210 people respectively. It was encouraging to see many of our students, graduates, as well as church goers and leaders in Singapore taking the time to attend the talks. We were blessed and most of all, challenged to change our paradigm of what we think the church's mission is, and the way we view our life as God's people.

The Theological and Missions Consultations were held in the afternoon followed by the public talks in the evening of both days. In the next few pages you will find a brief summary of the consultations (see pages 18-21). There is also an insert which is essentially the text of both the evening talks given by Dr Wright (see page i). Lastly we share with you some reflections on the talks by some of the attendees (see page 22).

Integral Mission and the Great Commission

Theology of Jubilee: Biblical, Social and Ethical Perspectives

Can there be Biblical Mission without Biblical Ethics?

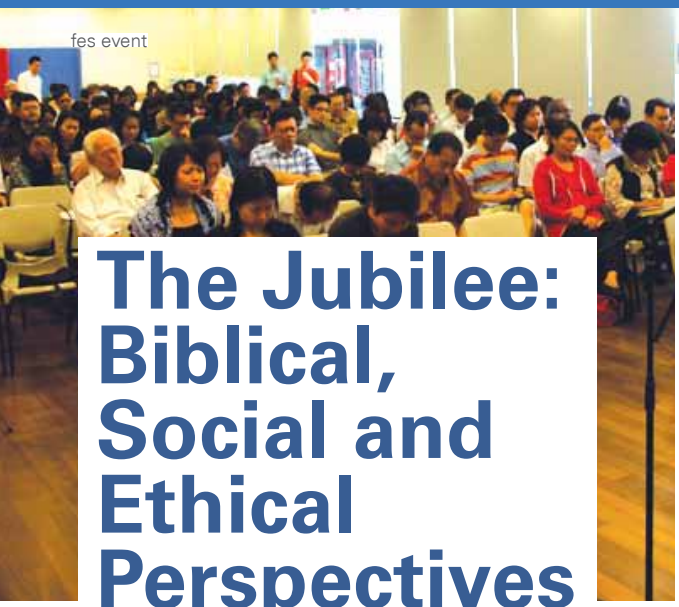
Is the Story of God for everyone?

Salvation Belongs to Our God: Biblical Perspectives on Salvation

The Mission of God and the Task of the Church

The DVDs of the public talks (one DVD) and theological consultation (one DVD) can be ordered through FES. Please email your order to library@fessingapore.org. Orders will only be ready for collection at the FES office in January 2014. A small donation is appreciated to cover the cost of processing the DVDs.

Rev. Dr Christopher J.H. Wright is International Ministries Director of Langham Partnership. He also chairs the Lausanne Committee's Theology Working Group and the Theological Resource Panel of TEAR Fund. He has written several books including *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, *The Mission of God* and *The Mission of God's People*.



The Jubilee: Biblical, Social and Ethical Perspectives

The Theological Consultation with Dr Chris Wright on 25 September dealt with the topic *The Jubilee: Biblical, Social and Ethical Perspectives.* Addressing the cultural significance of the Year of Jubilee to the Israelites in the Old Testament (OT), the session also explored the implications of the Jubilee to Christians and their relationship with society today. Following the address by Dr Wright, the response speakers, Dr Philip E. Satterthwaite (Principal and Lecturer in OT Hebrew and Hermeneutics, Biblical Graduate School of Theology) and Dr Tan Loe Joo (Lecturer in Systematic Theology, Trinity Theological College) gave further input to this topic.

Photograph
from left to right: Dr Kwa Kiem Kiok (moderator), Dr Tan Loe Joo, Dr Philip E. Satterthwaite, Dr Chris Wright.

The Jubilee was primarily an economic institution decreed by God to His people in the OT. It had two main points of concern: the family and the land.

Within the tribe and clan, each Israelite family would own a share of the land, and the law would ensure the continuity of that ownership. This was done through kinship redemption for property sold by the poor (Lev. 25:25) and the eventual restoration of all family lands in the Jubilee year. Family units thus maintained their economic viability as the Jubilee safeguarded against excess accumulation of resources. The social identity of the family within society was also protected. Kinship redemption extended to Israelites who sold themselves to foreigners living among them and similarly the Jubilee signified a release of all "slaves" and their families. The Jubilee was also a reinstatement of the Creation mandate for humanity to be good stewards of the earth. The land was to lie fallow on every seventh year and on the Jubilee year, so that its fertility would be restored during the period of rest.

The Mission of God and the Task of the Church: Integral Mission and the Great Commission

Dr Christopher J.H. Wright
International Ministries Director
Langham Partnership

Introduction: Where should we start?

Mission is such a vast topic that it is hard to know where to begin when trying to give a concise account of what it means. Sometimes phrases come into fashion and become popular ways to think of the task. For example:

- *Holistic mission* This term emphasises that in our mission activities we must address the whole of human need – physical, material, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual – not just the last of those. This is certainly an important corrective to narrowing mission down to a single task. But it can leave our mission very anthropocentric – all about 'me and my problems' (or you and yours). Mission can become therapeutic. 'You have all these needs and we are here to help you overcome them, whatever they are.' But that immediately raises the question, 'What in fact *is* the greatest human need?' If mission focuses on human need, then no matter how holistic you try to be, you still keep coming back to the question 'What do we human beings really need *most*?' And that quickly takes us back into the argument over the relative priority of evangelism and social action. We feel we must decide the priority on the basis of taxonomy of needs. But the whole argument still rotates mission around *human* need.

- *Missional church* In essence its point is that the church exists for mission, and everything that a church is and does should be missional – whether 'at home or abroad'. The church is 'on mission' everywhere and always. But this can leave our concept of mission still very anthropocentric with the focus on ourselves as human beings – not so much as sinners in need of salvation, but as saints in need of a

mission. But then the question arises – What is legitimately included in *the church's* mission? The familiar (and misleading) saying 'if everything is mission, nothing is mission' was born out of a concern that mission had become a basket filled with anything at all that a church wanted to do. So we are thrown back again to the old arguments about whether the church's *mission* should include social, economic, compassionate, ecological issues, or simply stick to verbal proclamation of the gospel.

Somehow if we start with definitions of mission that focus initially on humans or ourselves – whether as the 'object' of, or as the agents of mission activity – we end up in the same endless argument over relative needs and priorities. Such a debate still has a place, since we do need to be clear about what we ought to be doing and why, but it seems we should only come to that debate after starting first of all with God, and seeking to understand the mission of God as revealed in the Bible.

The Mission of God

What then is the great plan and purpose of God? One of the most concise answers to that question is given by Paul. God has 'made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfilment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ' (Eph.1:9-10). When Paul speaks of 'God's will', he does not (usually) mean God's personal guidance for our individual lives, but his great cosmic purpose throughout all time and space.

The mission of God is to redeem the whole of creation, broken by sin and evil, into the new creation, populated by the redeemed from every culture, through the cross and resurrection of Christ.

And Paul says – God's plan is to bring healing and unity to the whole creation in and through Christ. The mission of God is to redeem the whole of creation, broken by sin and evil, into the new creation, populated by the redeemed from every culture, through the cross and resurrection of Christ. I think that is what Paul meant by 'the whole counsel of God' (Acts 20:27). It is the plan of God from Genesis to Revelation. It includes the whole biblical grand-narrative: *Creation – Fall – Redemption – New Creation,* centred on and united in Christ.[1]

Mission, then, is fundamentally the activity of God, driving the whole biblical story forward and bringing it to its glorious conclusion. For

[1] This is explored in considerable depth and breadth in *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (IVP 2006).

this reason, when *The Cape Town Commitment* (the document from the Third Lausanne Congress in South Africa, 2010), comes to define the mission to which we are committed, it immediately shifts gear into a summary of the mission of God himself.

> We are committed to world mission, because it is central to our understanding of God, the Bible, the Church, human history and the ultimate future. The whole Bible reveals the mission of God to bring all things in heaven and earth into unity under Christ, reconciling them through the blood of his cross. In fulfilling his mission, God will transform the creation broken by sin and evil into the new creation in which there is no more sin or curse. God will fulfil his promise to Abraham to bless all nations on the earth, through the gospel of Jesus, the Messiah, the seed of Abraham. God will transform the fractured world of nations that are scattered under the judgment of God into the new humanity that will be redeemed by the blood of Christ from every tribe, nation, tongue and language, and will be gathered to worship our God and Saviour. God will destroy the reign of death, corruption and violence when Christ returns to establish his eternal reign of life, justice and peace. Then God, Immanuel, will dwell with us, and the kingdom of the world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ and he shall reign forever and ever.
>
> **Cape Town Commitment** I.10

We may well praise God for the great mission that he will assuredly accomplish. But we are still left with the 'So what?' question. What about us? Who are we and what are we here for? What is the mission of God's people? If the Bible shows us that God's great mission is so comprehensive in scope, then the church's mission must have some analogous breadth. Not, of course, in the sense that we can do everything God does – but when God calls us to participate with him in fulfilling God's own great purpose for creation and humanity, he calls us into a very big agenda indeed.

The Mission of God's People, the Church

There have been many attempts to define and describe the mission of the church. One that I find helpful was produced by the Anglican Consultative Council in 1984. It was conceived as a mission statement for the worldwide Anglican Communion and was adopted by the Lambeth Conference of bishops in 1988 as the *Five Marks of Mission*. It stated that:

'The mission of the church is the mission of Christ

1. To proclaim the good news of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To seek to transform unjust

structures of society
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and to sustain the life of the earth.' [2]

These could be summarised in a few words: evangelism, teaching, compassion, justice, and care of creation. It is a remarkably comprehensive and holistic list that can be shown to have deep roots in the whole Bible. In fact, all five 'marks' can be linked, directly or indirectly, to the 'Great Commission', *provided* we put at the centre of all of them the opening affirmation of the Great Commission – the Lordship of Christ over all creation.

That last point is essential. All of those five dimensions of mission depend on the Lordship of Christ.

- In evangelism – we proclaim the good news that Jesus Christ is Lord, King and Saviour
- In teaching – we bring people into maturity of faith and discipleship, in submission to Christ as Lord
- In compassion – we follow the example of the Lord Jesus, who 'went about doing good'.
- In seeking justice – we remember that the Lord Jesus Christ is the judge of all the earth
- In using and caring for creation – we are handling what belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ by right of creation and redemption.

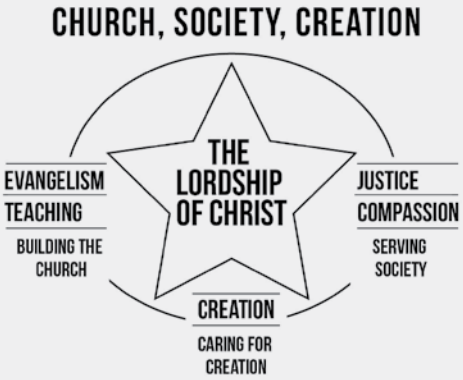
To keep things simpler we can group four of the five into two pairs, putting evangelism and teaching together, and putting compassion and justice together. This then creates three major missional tasks, or three focal points for our

[2] Bonds of Affection-1984 ACC-6 p.49, Mission in a Broken World-1990 ACC-8 p.101. See: http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/fivemarks.cfm Since 1984 there has been ongoing debate around the 'five marks', and some modification of the terminology. But the essential thrust of them remains, even under different expressions. For example, the Anglican Board of Mission in Australia recently re-framed them as follows:
- Witness to Christ's saving, forgiving, reconciling love for all people
- Build welcoming, transforming communities of faith
- Stand in solidarity with the poor and needy
- Challenge violence, injustice and oppression, and work for peace and reconciliation
- Protect, care for and renew life on our planet

http://www.anglicannews.org/news/2013/01/abm-welcomes-change-to-the-marks-of-mission.aspx

missional engagement: church, society and creation. Our mission, then, includes:

1. *Building the church* (through evangelism and teaching), bringing people to repentance, faith and obedience as disciples of Jesus Christ.
2. *Serving society* (through compassion and justice), in response to Jesus sending us 'into the world', to love and serve, to be salt and light, to do good, and to 'seek the welfare' of the people around us (as Jeremiah told the Israelites in Babylon, Jer. 29:7).
3. *Caring for creation* (through godly use of the resources of creation along with ecological concern and action), fulfilling the very first 'great commission' given to humanity in Genesis 1 and 2.



At this point the question may arise, 'Doesn't the Great Commission simply tell us to "go and evangelise the world"?' Well, no actually, it does not just say that. It is not a single command, but several. And it does not start with a command, but with the statement, 'All authority in heaven and earth is given to me.' Everything flows from that. We build the church because Jesus is Lord of the church. We serve society because Jesus (and not 'Caesar') is Lord of every nation, government and culture (whether acknowledged as such or not). And we care for creation because Jesus is Lord of heaven and *earth* – 'the earth is the Lord's and everything in it.'

This triple scope of mission is fully biblical. The *Cape Town Commitment* recognises that all three need to be held together in a truly holistic and integrated understanding of mission.

> Integral mission means discerning, proclaiming, and living out, the biblical truth that the gospel is God's good news, through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, for individual persons, *and* for society, *and* for creation. All three are broken and suffering because of sin; all three are included in the redeeming love and mission of God; all three must be part of the comprehensive mission of God's people.[3]

So let's go around those three main focal points, linking them together within our understanding

[3] Cape Town Commitment, I.7a.

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of integral mission, and seeing how they connect to the Great Commission.

1. Building the Church (Evangelism and Teaching)

'Make disciples, baptising them … *and* teaching them …'

This flows immediately and directly from the Lordship of Christ. For if Jesus of Nazareth is truly Lord and God, then we are summoned to *become* disciples by submitting to him in repentance and faith, and we are sent to *make* disciples by bringing others into that same relationship.

1.1 Evangelism

Evangelism means 'gospelling' the good news of what God has promised and accomplished through Christ. It means telling the whole story of what God has done (using the Old and New Testaments). It is proclaiming the good news that the God who created the world has acted to save the world from the consequences of human sin and satanic evil; that God has done so through his Son, Jesus of Nazareth, who came in fulfilment of God's promise to Israel and who, as God's appointed Messiah, died for our sins and was raised to life by the power of God; that this same Jesus is now the ascended Lord and that he will return as Judge and King to claim his inheritance with redeemed humanity in the new creation.

And evangelism means that when people respond to this good news of what God has done through Christ, by turning in repentance from whatever false self-constructed and self-serving story they are living in, and putting their faith in Jesus for salvation, we assure them that they have a part in that great biblical story of God's saving purpose for the world, that their sin is forgiven, and they can enjoy a right relationship with God now and eternally.

When people make that response, Jesus instructs us to baptise them 'into the name of' – that is, into relationship with – God the Father who loves them, God the Son who died for them, and God the Holy Spirit who dwells within them, bearing his fruit in a life being transformed into the likeness of Christ.

At this point it is important to stress that holistic mission, as I understand it, does not merely

include evangelism, but integrates everything else around it, since the gospel is the heart and core of God's mission and ours. I have come across two misleading ways of using the phrase 'holistic mission'.

- Sometimes 'holistic mission' is used to mean everything else *except* evangelism. It is a kind of 'bag' in which to put all the other ministries – social action, medical mission, poverty relief, community development, environmental action, human rights advocacy, working for peace and reconciliation, etc. But this is wrong and misleading. 'Holistic' means 'the whole thing'. Social action without evangelism is just as non-holistic as is evangelism without social engagement.

- Sometimes 'holistic mission' is used to mean everything and anything that can be called 'mission' *including* evangelism, but with no integration. It is just a bag of marbles in which evangelism becomes merely one among a multiplicity of things that a church might or might not be interested in. Mission becomes a smorgasbord of activities with evangelism one option among many. That is also misleading and unbiblical.

I prefer to speak of the *centrality* of evangelism, not because evangelism addresses our greatest human need, but rather because it connects us to the centrality of the gospel as the essential good news of what God has done to save the world. We may do a whole lot of things, quite legitimately, in the breadth of missional callings, but the integrating heart at the centre of them all must be the God-centred and God-generated reality of the gospel – conceived not merely as a personal insurance plan, but as the declaration of the biblical facts of the story of salvation, the cosmic story of God's redemptive purpose for the whole creation. And it is in evangelism that we tell that story. And it is from that story (only) that all our mission flows.

So when I speak of the centrality of the gospel and evangelism, I do not mean a centre that makes everything else peripheral – marginal and unimportant, 'out there, far off from the centre'. Rather I mean central in the way that a hub is central to a wheel. A wheel is an integrated functioning object, with a rim or tyre connected to the road. But the full orb of the rim must be connected at every point to the hub through the

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spokes. In that sense the hub is the integrating centre of all that the wheel is and does. And the hub is connected to the engine, transmitting its power to 'where the rubber hits the road'. There is no point asking 'which is more important – the hub or the rim?' If you haven't got both integrated together, you haven't got a wheel at all. Both are essential and must function together.

In this analogy for integral or integrated mission, the engine is the dynamic power of the biblical gospel (what God has done in Christ to save the world). The hub is our sharing of that good news. The rim is the embodiment of the gospel in the world in life and work and all our engagement with context and culture (the road). To drive a car you need integration and connectedness of things that are different from each other in themselves but cannot really function meaningfully apart from each other – you need the hub of the wheel connected to the engine, and you need the rim of the wheel connected to the road. Otherwise you'll get nowhere! To engage in integral mission you need integration between the historical truth of the gospel, the declaration of that in evangelism and the embodiment of it in social and contextual engagement with society and creation.

Once again, *The Cape Town Commitment* seeks to capture this integrated understanding of mission[4].

[4] The Cape Town Commitment I.10b.

The integrity of our mission. The *source* of all our mission is what God has done in Christ for the redemption of the whole world, as revealed in the Bible. Our evangelistic task is to make that good news known to all nations. The *context* of all our mission is the world in which we live, the world of sin, suffering, injustice, and creational disorder, into which God sends us to love and serve for Christ's sake. All our mission must therefore reflect the integration of evangelism and committed engagement in the world, both being ordered and driven by the whole biblical revelation of the gospel of God.

To engage in integral mission you need integration between the historical truth of the gospel, the declaration of that in evangelism and the embodiment of it in social and contextual engagement with society and creation.

'Evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Saviour and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God … The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his Church and responsible service in the world … We affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our

Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and humankind, our love for our neighbour and our obedience to Jesus Christ … The salvation we proclaim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities. Faith without works is dead.'[5]

'Integral mission is the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. It is not simply that evangelism and social involvement are to be done alongside each other. Rather, in integral mission our proclamation has social consequences as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life. And our social involvement has evangelistic consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ. If we ignore the world, we betray the Word of God which sends us out to serve the world. If we ignore the Word of God, we have nothing to bring to the world.' [6]

So then,
Let us keep evangelism at the centre of the fully-integrated scope of all our mission, inasmuch as the gospel itself is the source, content and authority of all biblically-valid mission. All we do should be both an embodiment and a declaration of the love and grace of God and his saving work through Jesus Christ.[7]

[5] *The Lausanne Covenant,* Paragraphs 4 and 5
[6] The Micah Declaration on Integral Mission
[7] The Cape Town Commitment IID.1.e

1.2 Teaching / discipling

'… teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.'

We are to make disciples the way Jesus himself made disciples. We do not just bring people to conversion and leave it at that. The seed needs deep soil and good roots in order to bear fruit. Churches need not only to be planted through evangelism, but also watered through teaching. Both are Great Commission mandates.

Teaching is deeply rooted in the Bible. It was an essential part of the way God called, shaped and 'educated' his people Israel in the Old Testament. For many generations God was teaching his people – through the Torah, Psalms and Wisdom, through priests and prophets – teaching them the truth about God, creation, humanity, sin, redemption, worship, and how to live as a covenant people for the ultimate blessing of the nations.

So it's not surprising that Jesus comes as a teacher. 'Rabbi' they called him. He was so much more, of course, but from the moment he called his disciples to be with him he was teaching, teaching, and teaching. Discipleship did not happen overnight.

When we look at Paul, we notice that teaching was integral to his

whole life as a missionary church planter. Often he had to leave a newly-planted church quickly, under threat, but even then he would write to them to encourage and teach. And when he had the opportunity, in Ephesus, he stayed for nearly three years, during which he transformed a group of twelve disciples into a city church with several households and functioning elders. He tells us he had taught them not only all that was helpful for them, but 'the whole counsel of God' – i.e. the whole scriptural revelation of God's great plan and purpose (Acts 19-20). And when Paul could not personally do the teaching he ensured that it was done by others who were part of his missionary team, like Timothy and Titus. Or Apollos (from Africa), who was learned in the scriptures, a gifted teacher, who gained further theological education at the home of Priscilla and Aquila (in Asia), and then went to Corinth (in Europe), where he systematically engaged in teaching that included Old Testament hermeneutics, Christology and Apologetics (Acts 18:24-28). Later, when the Christians in Corinth divided into factions boasting loyalty to Paul or Apollos, Paul wouldn't allow it. Yes, Paul was the evangelist church-planter. Yes, Apollos was a learned church-teacher. But they shared a common mission. Paul insists that the evangelist (planter) and the teacher (waterer) have 'one purpose' – or a single mission (1 Cor. 3:5-9).

So teaching within the church in all its forms, including what we would now call theological education, is an intrinsic part of mission. It is not an extra. It is not merely ancillary to 'real mission'. Teaching, if we take Jesus seriously, has to be included within our obedience to the Great Commission. Once again *The Cape Town Commitment* hits this particular nail squarely on the head.

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> The mission of the Church on earth is to serve the mission of God, and the mission of theological education is to strengthen and accompany the mission of the Church. Theological education serves *first* to train those who lead the Church as pastor-teachers, equipping them to teach the truth of God's Word with faithfulness, relevance and clarity; and *second*, to equip all God's people for the missional task of understanding and relevantly communicating God's truth in every cultural context. Theological education engages in spiritual warfare, as 'we demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God,

and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.' [8]

A. Those of us who lead churches and mission agencies need to acknowledge that theological education is intrinsically missional. Those of us who provide theological education need to ensure that it is intentionally missional, since its place within the academy is not an end in itself, but to serve the mission of the Church in the world.[9]

2. Serving Society (Compassion and Justice)

Where is that in the Great Commission? it might be asked. I see it plainly implied in what Jesus says in verse 18: '… teaching them to observe *all that I have commanded you*.' For it is certain that Jesus had plenty of words to say to his disciples about compassion and justice.

But first it is worth hearing the echoes in that phrase itself. It sounds like a very deliberate echo of the way Moses or God addressed the Israelites in the book of Deuteronomy, urging them again and again to 'be careful to observe all that I (or the LORD your God) command you'.[10] And in Deuteronomy it is very clear that what God commanded Israel was to reflect God's own character, by 'walking in his ways'. Read, for example, Deuteronomy 10:12-19. After telling them what God is like and who he most cares for, the text immediately tells the Israelites to do the same – to care for the needy.

> For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt (Deut. 10:17-19).

That is just a single example that could be multiplied many times throughout the Old Testament Scriptures that saturated the mind of Jesus. It is the call to be like God by showing compassion and seeking justice for the poor and needy, for the homeless, the family-less, the land-less – just as God had done for Israel in their need.

So, in the same way and in the same tone of voice, Jesus says to his disciples, 'Your mission is to make disciples and to teach them

[8] 2 Corinthians 10:4-5

[9] The Cape Town Commitment IIF.4.

[10] This would not be surprising, since Jesus meditated deeply on Deuteronomy, quoting from it three times when tempted by Satan in the wilderness.

to obey what I have commanded you, which aligns with all that God has commanded his people from the beginning.'

Even if we only look back through Matthew's Gospel we find this note again and again.

• Matthew 5:6: 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice.' The word is often translated 'righteousness', and we have tended to confine that to being right with God. It includes that, of course, but for Jesus and the Old Testament Scriptures, the word meant not only a right relationship with God, but *right, just* and *fair* relationships on earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for that, said Jesus.

• Matthew 6:33: 'Seek first God's kingdom and his justice / righteousness.'

• Matthew 23:23: 'Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law – justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practised the latter, without neglecting the former.'

Jesus says that the really heavy stuff (literally 'the weightier matters') of the Torah, are 'justice, mercy and faithfulness'. Again, it is very likely he has in mind the similar triplet found in Micah 6:8, 'Do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God'. Or the one in Zechariah 7:9, 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another.'

The good news of the kingdom of God must be shared. But when Jesus talks about 'light' he is speaking of *lives* that are attractive by being filled with goodness, mercy, love, compassion and justice.

Out of this shared scriptural background comes Jesus astonishing word to his disciples, 'You are the light of the world' (Matt. 5:14-16). What on earth did he mean by such a sweeping statement? Did he mean that they would be preachers of the truth of the gospel that would bring light to people in the darkness of ignorance and sin? Yes, of course he would have included that in the overall task of the apostolic mission – as Paul explains using the same metaphor in 2 Corinthians 4:4-6. But look again at what Jesus actually stresses when he explains what he means by 'light'. 'Let your light shine before others, that they may *see your good deeds* and glorify your Father in heaven.' Not, 'that they may hear your great testimony', but 'see your good deeds'. They did have a message to preach – of course they did. The good news of the kingdom of God must be shared. But when Jesus talks about 'light' he is speaking

of *lives* that are attractive[11] by being filled with goodness, mercy, love, compassion and justice.

Once again Jesus is drawing on a strong Old Testament tradition. God had called Israel to be a 'light to the nations', and that included the quality of their lives as a society. 'Light' had a strongly ethical and social meaning. Listen to Isaiah, and notice the combination of 'light' and 'righteousness' in the sense explained above. Light shines from people committed to compassion and justice. And, as Isaiah would continue, such light, because it reflects the light of God's own presence and glory among his people, will draw the nations – it is missionally attractive (Isa. 60:1-3). It will bring people to glorify the living God. Isn't that what Jesus said?

> Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
> to loose the chains of injustice
> and untie the cords of the yoke,
> to set the oppressed free
> and break every yoke?
> Is it not to share your food with the hungry
> and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter –
> when you see the naked, to clothe them,
> and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?
> Then *your light* will break forth like the dawn,
> and your healing will quickly appear;
> then *your righteousness* will go before you,
>
> if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry
> and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,
> then *your light* will rise in the darkness,
> and your night will become like the noonday (Isa. 58:6-8, 10, my italics).

So then, in the Old Testament God commanded Israel to be a people committed to practical, down-to-earth exercise of compassion and justice. And Jesus both endorsed that mandate for his disciples (and indeed radically deepened it), and then in the Great Commission commanded them to pass it on to the new disciples they would make ('teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you'). Both in their life as a community of disciples, and in their mission of making disciples, they must reflect the character of the God who cares for the poor and needy, who defends the cause of the widow and orphan.

And they did.

We know, of course, about the exciting story of the mission of the early church, spreading in all directions through evangelism and church-planting. But we should not

[11] The word translated 'good' is *kalos*, which also means 'beautiful', not just morally upright.

overlook how the apostles and those first little communities of believers showed a strong commitment to this other dimension of the Great Commission – obeying what Jesus himself had taught about social and economic compassion and justice.

Luke tells us twice that the earliest community of Jesus-followers in Jerusalem sought to give their spiritual unity practical outworking in economic mutuality (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-38). They did not believe there should be any poor persons among them while they had the ability to do something about it. Whether consciously or not, they were fulfilling another word of God in Deuteronomy (Acts 4:34 is almost word for word the same as the Greek translation of Deut. 15:4).

Paul's first missionary journey with Barnabas was actually not when they were sent by the church in Antioch to preach the gospel in Asia Minor (Acts 13), but when they had been sent earlier by that same church to bring famine relief to needy believers in Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-30). That memory must have been part of the reason for Paul's sustained effort to raise funds among the gentile churches in Greece for the support of the poor in Judea. Clearly Paul had taught those new disciples that responsibility, such that they even pleaded for the privilege of sharing in it (2 Cor. 8-9). In fact, at a most significant moment in Paul's missionary career, when he was granted acceptance ('the right hand of fellowship') among the Jerusalem apostles for the gospel message he was preaching, he adds this revealing comment, showing that Paul included care for the poor as an integral part of his missionary work:

> All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I had been eager to do all along (Gal. 2:10).

That emphasis on practical economic and social compassion echoes elsewhere. The following passages speak for themselves and leave us in no doubt about the importance of this kind of obedience: 1Timothy 6:17-19; James 2:14-17; 1 John 3:17-18. Jesus and the apostles would all have agreed with the simple affirmation of Proverbs 29:7, 'The righteous person cares about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern'.

Once again, *The Cape Town Commitment* provides a rich biblical foundation for this dimension of mission.

> We *love the world's poor and suffering*. The Bible tells us that the Lord is loving toward all he has made, upholds the cause of the oppressed, loves the foreigner, feeds the hungry, sustains the fatherless and widow.[12] The Bible also shows that God wills to do these things

[12] Psalms 145:9, 13, 17; 147:7-9; Deuteronomy 10:17-18

through human beings committed to such action. God holds responsible especially those who are appointed to political or judicial leadership in society,[13] but all God's people are commanded - by the law and prophets, Psalms and Wisdom, Jesus and Paul, James and John - to reflect the love and justice of God in practical love and justice for the needy. [14]

Such love for the poor demands that we not only love mercy and deeds of compassion, but also that we do justice through exposing and opposing all that oppresses and exploits the poor. 'We must not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist.'[15] [16]

We are called to the integration of faith and works, of word and deed, of the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. To put it more simply, there is no biblical mission without biblical living.

[13] Genesis 18:19; Exodus 23:6-9; Deuteronomy 16:18-20; Job 29:7-17; Psalms 72:4, 12-14; 82; Proverbs 31:4-9; Jeremiah 22:1-3; Daniel 4:27

[14] Exodus 22:21-27; Leviticus 19:33-34; Deuteronomy 10:18-19; 15:7-11; Isaiah 1:16-17; 58:6-9; Amos 5:11-15, 21-24; Psalm 112; Job 31:13-23; Proverbs 14:31; 19:17; 29:7; Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 14:12-14; Galatians 2:10; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Romans 15:25-27; 1 Timothy 6:17-19; James 1:27; 2:14-17; 1 John 3:16-18

[15] *The Lausanne Covenant* Paragraph 5

[16] The Cape Town Commitment I.7.c

Integral mission is, I think, nothing more than putting flesh on the phrase which Paul uses to summarise his whole missional effort among all nations, at the beginning and end of Romans: 'the obedience of faith'. We are called to the integration of faith and works, of word and deed, of the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. To put it more simply, there is no biblical mission without biblical living.

3. Caring for creation

We could in fact have started here with creation, since it's where Jesus starts in the Great Commission. As I said earlier, the Great Commission does not begin with a command but with an affirmation, 'All authority in heaven and earth is given to me.' That combination 'heaven and earth' is the typical scriptural way of referring to the whole of creation. It's not only where Jesus starts, it's also where the Bible starts (Gen. 1:1), and where the Bible ends (with a new heaven and new earth – the new creation, of Rev. 21-22). The whole mission of God in the Bible story runs from creation to new creation, and Jesus stands at the centre of it, claiming to be Lord over it all. Jesus is not just 'up in heaven'. Jesus is Lord of heaven *and earth*.

Deuteronomy again provides the backdrop to the amazing claim that Jesus makes in Matthew 28:18. Listen to Moses talking to the Israelites about their God:

> Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other (Deut. 4:39).

YHWH, the LORD God of Israel, is God of heaven and earth (that is, the whole creation). This is a truth about God that the Old Testament repeats all over the place, especially in the Psalms. And Jesus, standing on the Mount of Ascension, calmly takes that truth about the God whom all his followers knew and worshipped and claims it for himself. Not surprisingly Matthew records that when they met Jesus there, 'they worshipped him' (though he also points out with frank honesty that some doubted). They knew then that as they met with the crucified and risen Christ, they were in the presence of the living God, creator of heaven and earth.

Whatever our mission will include in fulfilling the Great Commission, it presupposes that Jesus is Lord of creation, that the earth belongs to him. We are tenants in, and stewards of, his property.

Paul, in his usual way, expands this cosmic, creational truth about Christ in one of the most amazing passages he ever wrote: Colossians 1:15-20. In the extract below, notice how many times Paul refers to 'heaven and earth', or to 'all things' – which was another Jewish way of referring to the whole created universe.

> The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth … all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together …. God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

The whole universe, including our planet Earth, was created by and for Christ, is sustained in existence by Christ, belongs to Christ as his inheritance, and has been redeemed by Christ through the cross. The same cosmic truth is stated in different ways in John 1 and Hebrews 1.

So if the earth we live on is the property of Jesus, belonging to him by right of creation and redemption, we cannot separate our personal submission to Jesus as Lord from how we think about, and how we act upon, the earth. Godly use and careful stewardship of the resources of the earth, along with specific ecological advocacy and action, are legitimate dimensions of Christian mission. Christian mission cannot exclude our primal human mission, which was to exercise godly rule over creation by serving and keeping it (Gen. 1:26-28, combined with Gen. 2:15).

The earth is created, sustained and redeemed by Christ.[17] We cannot

[17] Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1:2-3

... to proclaim the gospel that says 'Jesus is Lord' is to proclaim the gospel that includes the earth, since Christ's Lordship is over all creation.

claim to love God while abusing what belongs to Christ by right of creation, redemption and inheritance. We [as Christians] care for the earth and responsibly use its abundant resources, not according to the rationale of the secular world, but for the Lord's sake. If Jesus is Lord of all the earth, we cannot separate our relationship to Christ from how we act in relation to the earth. For to proclaim the gospel that says 'Jesus is Lord' is to proclaim the gospel that includes the earth, since Christ's Lordship is over all creation. Creation care is thus a gospel issue within the Lordship of Christ.

Such love for God's creation demands that we repent of our part in the destruction, waste and pollution of the earth's resources and our collusion in the toxic idolatry of consumerism. Instead, we commit ourselves to urgent and prophetic ecological responsibility. We support Christians whose particular missional calling is to environmental advocacy and action, as well as those committed to godly fulfilment of the mandate to provide for human welfare and needs by exercising responsible dominion and stewardship. [18]

[18] The Cape Town Commitment I.7.a.

It is baffling to me that there are so many Christians, including sadly (and especially) those who claim to be evangelicals, for whom this matter of creation-care, or ecological concern and action, is weak and neglected at best, and even rejected with hostile prejudice at worst. It seems to me that the reason for this is a very defective theology of creation among contemporary evangelicals. To put it bluntly, some people seem to have damaged Bibles, in which the first two and last two pages have got mysteriously torn off. They start at Genesis 3, because they know all about sin. And they end at Revelation 20, because they know all about the day of judgment. And they have their personal solution to the sin problem and their personal security for the day of judgment, provided of course by the death and resurrection of Jesus. Praise God, I believe that too. But the Bible has a much bigger story, the story of the whole creation, within which my personal salvation fits. And the Lordship of Christ spans the whole story. So I need to see him as Lord of my physical environment as well as my spiritual salvation, and behave as his disciple in relation to both.[19]

[19] There is no space here to explore the full biblical teaching on creation that makes it entirely legitimate to include creation care within the spectrum of Christian mission. Elsewhere I have provided such a survey of the goodness, the glory and the goal of creation. See *The Mission of God*, ch. 12; *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (IVP: 2004), ch.4; and *The Mission of God's People* (Zondervan: 2010), ch. 3.

Conclusion: So what?

What implications might we take from this survey of the five marks of mission, or three focal points of mission, in relation to the Great Commission? Three points seem to follow.

1. God's whole mission is for God's whole church (but every*body* can't do every*thing*).

Mission is not a specialist activity for a few professionals (missionaries or mission partners). The church as a whole exists for the sake of God's mission. As has been said, it is not so much the case that God has a mission for the church (to be carried out by a few church-paid professionals), as that God has the church for his mission. The whole church is, in that sense, missional.[20] Everything the church is and does should be connected in some way to our very reason for existence. That is why I dislike the much-abused saying, 'If everything is mission, nothing is mission'. Usually that arises from a fear that if everything a church does is *described* as 'mission', then there will be no special category left for evangelism and sending out missionaries. I hope it is clear from what I said above about the centrality of evangelism and the gospel, that I am utterly committed to the importance of both those things. But they simply are not the whole of what I believe the Bible includes in the mission of the church, in the sense of all that God has called the church into existence for. It would be more accurate, biblically, to simply say, 'if everything is mission, everything is mission.' The whole church is called to participate in the whole mission of God.

> **... not a case of everybody doing everything, but everybody being intentional about something, according to the gifting and leading of God.**

However, don't be overwhelmed! It is not a case of everybody doing everything, but everybody being intentional about *some*thing, according to the gifting and leading of God. Sometimes people say, after a sermon or lecture about holistic mission, 'You talk about all these different kinds of mission, but there's only one of me. I can't do all that!'. To which my reply is, 'I expect God thought of that too, which is why he created the church.' It takes the whole church to engage in God's whole mission.

[20] A Danish friend of mine, Birger Nygaard, once commented that he found the expression 'missional church' redundant. It sounds, he said, like 'female woman'. If it isn't female, it isn't a woman. Likewise, if it isn't missional, it isn't church. It may be a bunch of people doing religious things together, but if they aren't committed to God's mission in the world, they have (quite literally) lost the plot.

2. The whole church's mission includes every church member (but we have different callings and sendings).

If the whole church exists for God's mission, then so do all its members. The church is missional by definition, so all Christians are missional by calling. We need to radically challenge the mistaken paradigm that only *some* members are 'mission partners'. What does that make the rest of us? Non-mission partners? Sleeping partners? Usually by 'mission partners' we mean those who are supported and sent by the church and have gone overseas or into some other kind of cross-cultural mission. Then let's call them that – 'cross-cultural mission partners', or 'international mission partners' – and not give the impression that mission is not for the rest of us. As Hugh Palmer, Rector of All Souls, Langham Place, said one Sunday: 'This church sends out 1,500 mission partners every week – and a few of them are serving abroad' – implying, of course, that the majority were entering the mission field of the world immediately outside the church doors, living and working there in their every day work and callings. The mission field is wherever faith meets unbelief, wherever the kingdom of God in a believer's life encounters the kingdom of this world. That is the front-line of mission. And that could be next door as much as in the next continent. Where is your front-line? Where is your church's front-line?

The mission field is wherever faith meets unbelief, wherever the kingdom of God in a believer's life encounters the kingdom of this world.

We need to distinguish between the general missional calling that all of us share, and the specific giftings and callings that God will lay on different ones according to his sovereign grace. All of us are to be ready to bear witness to our faith, but some are specifically gifted as evangelists. All of us are to 'let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another', but some are specifically gifted as teachers. All of us are to be ready to do acts of kindness and speak up for what is just and right, but some are specifically called to work in political and judicial advocacy, or in tackling global poverty, hunger and disease. All of us should live responsibly in our use and care of creation, but some are called and equipped to pursue environmental biology and do ecologically appropriate scientific research and advocacy.

3. Every member's mission includes the whole of life (there is no secular-sacred divide)

If that last point calls for a change in our paradigm of the church's conception of mission, then this point calls for a change in our personal perspective on life. We have to break the ingrained habit of thinking in two spheres – the secular and the sacred. It has become such a dominating paradigm that we are scarcely conscious of it. It just seems the way things are. There is a 'religious' part of life that God is interested in – church, Christian activities, worship and prayer, evangelism, etc. And there is the rest of life, where most of us spend most of our time – work, family, leisure. And we assume that the whole point of the second sphere is only to give us a bit of money and spare time to do whatever we can to 'support' the first sphere (where the really keen Christians live, as people in church-paid 'full-time ministry').

This is a toxic and demoralising divide. People are left thinking that what they spend most of their time doing (working in the 'secular' world) has no value to God or for eternity, while they can only give spare time and some money to the one thing that they suppose God really cares about.

But the Great Commission begins by telling us that Jesus is Lord of all of life within his whole creation. Jesus is Lord of the workplace and the family; Lord of the streets and the skies; Lord of schools and slums; Lord of hospitals and housing; Lord of governments, business, academia, sport and culture; Lord of all time and space.

... the Great Commission begins by telling us that Jesus is Lord of all of life within his whole creation ... So the discipleship and mission that Jesus calls us into is for the whole of life.

So the discipleship and mission that Jesus calls us into is for the whole of life. If Jesus is Lord of heaven and earth; then there is no place, no job, no vocation, no day or night, no part of life at all; that is exempt from the rest of what he says in the Great Commission and all that it refers back to in the rest of the Gospel.

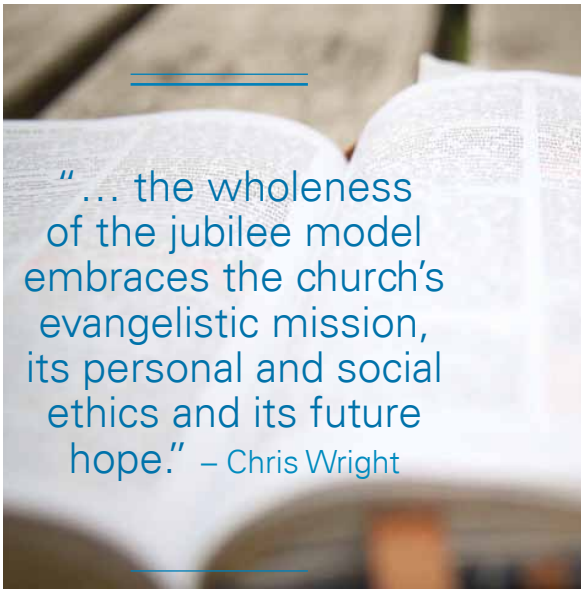
Mission is not an agenda to be tackled by people assigned to 'do it for the rest of us'. Mission is the mode of existence for the whole life of every member of the whole church.

(This paper was first presented at an event organised by FES Singapore featuring talks by Dr Christopher J. H. Wright at St Andrew's Cathedral, Singapore on 25 & 26 September 2013.)

God who relates to His people as a landlord to a tenant, declares his sovereignty over how the land should be used with time, promising His overflowing providence if Israel obeyed. The observance of the Jubilee was a commemoration of God's complete redemption of the Israelites from Egypt. In the face of any oppression, it would give the Israelites a hope for the future.

Israel was thus a prototype, an example of how God wanted to relate to both humanity and creation. The inter-relationships within humanity and her relationship with creation would reflect God's total authority. The language of Jubilee is further seen in the Gospels. In Luke 4, Jesus inaugurated the Kingdom of God by proclaiming Jubilee, the Year of the Lord's favour. The early Christians in Acts 4:34-35 shared their possessions freely to those in need, thus practicing a form of Jubilee. The idea of God being on the side of the poor and oppressed also gives the Jubilee its meaning as a hope of God's complete and decisive redemption.

The Jubilee is an important concept which should inform the basics of any framework of Christian mission. As Christians, we share the collective memories of God's people in the OT. However, the challenge today is for the OT to be *accepted* and *used* in Christian discipleship. Christian ministry, especially in Singapore, should begin with the conviction that the Christian message encompasses *both* Testaments. Only then can we allow the Jubilee to transform the way we view and interact with our culture and its systems. A possible approach is to study the OT within its context, and apply a model-based approach to identify the principles in the Jubilee and the rest of the Torah. We then allow these principles to shape our imagination for a different way of doing things and designing systems. This transformation should begin from within our congregations, and eventually flow to our community outreach programs and our personal Christian witness in secular society.



Salvation Belongs to Our God: Biblical Perspectives on Salvation

Photo Below: from left to right: Dr Jerry Hwang (moderator), Mr Daniel Wong, Rev. Dr Christoper Chia, Dr Chris Wright.

At the Missions Consultation on 26 September, Dr Chris Wright addressed the biblical teaching of salvation and how salvation is defined within a missions framework to the whole world. Rev. Dr Christopher Chia (Senior Pastor of Adam Road Presbyterian Church) and Mr Daniel Wong (OMF National Director) were the response speakers for this session.

Salvation is first and foremost, the whole property of God. It is not something that we can 'get' from performing religious acts. Rather, salvation is the story of what the God of the Bible has done in the past to the present, and will do in the future. The historical dimension of God's salvation is that it entered the world through the Israelites, who were blessed to be a blessing to the nations (Ps. 67:1-2). Salvation is also about God's identity – who He is and what He is doing today, through the church. There is also the future where God will redeem all creation and humanity unto Himself. Thus, salvation is an over-arching theme in the story of God's mission to the world. As Christians, we become part of that story and tell it with our lives and words.

The power of God in His salvation also means that salvation is holistic, encompassing individuals, communities and the whole of creation. It is not something that is confined to the soul. Rather, salvation is the restoration of God's blessing to the world, redeeming what was lost through sin and rebellion. The salvation message of Jesus was one of hope and transformation, as much as repentance from sin and salvation from God's wrath. Therefore, salvation is both individual and collective, and we should hold both in tension.

"Salvation is not some subjective experience of esoteric faith and individual piety. It is rather … a **biblically informed experience**, an entering into **this** story of **this** God saving the world through these events, and ultimately through **this** person, his Son, the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth."

– Chris Wright

Salvation is also fully accomplished by the work of Jesus in his life and on the cross. On the cross, He atoned for the sins of the world once and for all. Paul relates the cross and the creational purpose of the whole world in Colossians 1:15-20. God reconciles "all things" in the world through Christ's saving work on the cross. Therefore any holistic theology of salvation should be centered on the cross.

A note from the Q&A session was that Christians are more known to be anti-this or that. Perhaps we can be a more powerful witness to society if we define ourselves as pro-something, like pro-God, pro-social welfare, and so on. Also, we should be careful not to offend others along the way. When Paul was witnessing in Ephesus he was described by secular society as being non-offensive to the society and its gods (Acts 19:37).

A challenge for local ministry is perhaps to encourage people to look to the Gospel and look outward to society, rather than busying ourselves with unnecessary internal concerns. Knowing that salvation has already happened and is also still being played out today should inspire a certain dynamism in our ministries. Coming to terms with the scope of salvation as intended by God even from the beginning should also broaden our engagement with society and guard our minds against narrow-mindedness, especially towards people of other faiths.

Also, we should pursue the conceptual unity of churches, para-churches and missions agencies, in the same way we identify ourselves with Israel as the whole people of God. Perhaps then we can be greater witnesses to the grand story of God in our society today.

Both Consultations are reported by **Daniel Lau** / *Daniel graduated from NTU in 2011. He is currently a M&E Consultant. Daniel also serves as an Associate Staffworker with FES Missions / G Cube Programme*

Reflections

Student leaders from the FES National Student Council reflected on the talks by Dr Wright:

The talks reminded me of the importance of being salt and light on campus. We are not students who happen to be Christians but we are Christians who are students. As light, we are to be 'attractive' – drawing people to Christ through what we do and say. **Cavin Sng** / SP CF Exco member

Creation is the Lord's property. If we love Him, we should love what He has made. As Chris Wright mentioned, not caring for creation is like we have left out the first two and last two chapters of the Bible. Many of us do not see the significance of caring for creation. We also lack compassion for the community outside our own, even when issues are surfaced to us. Not that we are to become activists or put people on a guilt-trip, but as stewards of Christ, caring for the environment is part of living out our faith in God. **Wong Jian Ann** / TP SCF Chairman

During the Q&A session, we touched on how we know that our mission is a 'success'. It made me realise how often, in our desire to achieve our KPIs (Key Performance Indicators), we lose sight of what we are doing and why we are doing what we are doing. We seem to be more concerned about the number of people who attended and how many people responded to the altar call. **Lim Yang Jun** / NTU CCF Chairman

At the conclusion of the last talk, Dr Wright reminded us that 'not everyone is called to do everything'. However, though we can't do everything, it does not mean that we can't do anything. We need to see the bigger picture, look beyond ourselves and find ways to engage in God's mission together and in our own ministries. We can't do everything, but we need to be faithful to everything that God has called us to. **Zeng Hanyi** / VCF & FES National Student Council Chairman

"God calls us to be faithful in all the little ways we can, to do those things He has called us to in our own life and generation; and allow Him to build those things together into the glorious picture that He will bring into completion when the people of every tribe and nation are gathered before the throne of God." – Chris Wright

"The biggest challenge is the need for better teaching as well as greater integrity and authenticity to actually be what we are supposed to say – to look more like Jesus – for if we do not look like Jesus, there is not much point in talking about Him." – Chris Wright

Dr. Chris Wright's talks helped us to make sense of God's mission in our current context. How, then, can we contextualise what he has shared to student ministry? Here are some of my thoughts on how the triple focus identified by Dr Wright – the individual persons, society and culture, and creation – plays out in student ministry.

Teaching and discipling plays an important role in sowing seeds into deep soil and establishing firm roots in the individual person. As Dr Wright mentioned, theological education needs to be intentionally missional, and this is all the more crucial in student ministry, considering its strategic positioning. Students need to interpret the missional thrusts of the Bible in the contexts of their personal lives and their school life. They also need to discover how education informs their participation in society and academia negotiates our relationships with society and creation. In understanding the ways of the world, one can perhaps learn the ways of sustainable and just stewardship of the creation that has been entrusted to us. It is perhaps also noteworthy that learning, in tertiary education, more often than not takes place in a community. As one lives out the story of God's love and glory, one simultaneously poses an invitation to others to participate in His grand narrative. This is also how evangelism, as conceived by Dr Wright, can take place in our communities.

We are ultimately called to be faithful, and not necessarily successful; thus was Dr Wright's sobering reminder in his closing. May the Lordship of Christ always humble us and embolden us as we endeavour to contextualise God's truth in the reality of student life and partake in His redemptive mission.

Lau Bee Juan / *Bee Juan graduated from NUS in 2012. She is currently a teacher at Queensway Secondary School. She also serves as an FES Associate Staffworker assigned to the VCF Hall ministry.*

SIM SCF EXCO 2013

Photo:
back row, left to right: Andrew, Jason, Joshua, Jerry, Edmund; front row, left to right: Chelsea, Sheryl, Debby, Clara

SIM SCF

Singapore Institute of Management Students' Christian Fellowship (SIM SCF) is an interdenominational body of Christian students. Our vision is to grow as a community of Christians in SIM who will bear a good testimony of Jesus Christ in word and deed. Currently, SIM SCF has a membership of about 50 and our fellowship meetings take place every Wednesday evening for either Bible study at cell group level or corporate meetings. We also organise various activities like camps and outings throughout the year to continually engage our members.

The CF theme for this year is *Loving God, Serving Others* and the theme verse comes from John 13:34-35 (NIV) which reads, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Christians are called to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. As a fellowship we hope to build in our members a deep rootedness in Christ and a love for God that compels us to share the love we have received with others. We are aslo called to love our neighbours as ourselves, and that means to extend to others the same kind of care, concern, protection and love we would give to ourselves. Loving others is demonstrated through our actions. Serving others stems from a love for God and for His people and when we serve others, we serve God.

All this sounds simple, but in reality, it is not easy to understand what it means to let the love of God flow through us and out of us to bless others such that the world will know and see that we are indeed His disciples.

Thanksgiving

Thank God for His guidance and faithfulness throughout the first half of this term. Initially, we were unsure of how the year might pan out. But it is only through God's grace that the programmes and activities have been coming together and there is always something to take away after each session. Indeed this is a testimony of God's grace that this is *His* ministry and He will not let it fail because He wants to do a great work through us.

We saw a significant number of members graduate following the end of last academic year and that left a big hole in terms of our numbers but God has continued to grow His ministry and we are blessed with many new faces at the beginning of the new school term. Some of them have even stepped up to start serving.

Loving God, Serving Others

Homecoming 2013 - a time of fellowship, catching up and games at the start of the new academic year.

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, His love endures forever
– Psalm 107:1

Prayer Points

Pray for:

• the Holy Spirit to guide us as we prepare for Christmas. Pray that we will have wisdom, be equipped and not be afraid to share the good news with our friends.

• the leaders to be of one heart and mind in Christ as the CF continues to move forward.

• the CF to have a welcoming heart so that we can continue to grow the body of Christ in SIM. Pray for the campus community to get connected with the CF and for new students to join us.

• all CFers to be disciplined, conscientious and consistent in our studies. Where God has called us right now – to be a student, let us be the best that we can be so that we may indeed be a good testimony of Jesus Christ.

Jason Tan / SIM SCF Chairman / Banking & Finance (UOL), Year 3

ICF Retreat in October 2013

ICF

The Lord has been good all the time even up till now!

My name is Kalio Sobomabo Tam Dennis, but everyone knows me as Boma (or Buma by some). I am the current chairperson of the **Informatics Christian Fellowship (ICF)**, and I want to share a testimony that has been unfolding in my life since I came to Singapore.

Henry sharing his testimony

Photo Below:
ICFers with graduate helpers and staffworker Gabriel Jiang (bottom row, first from right). Boma is standing behind Gabriel.

We (my friends and I) arrived in Singapore on 4 March 2011. I was excited to be in Singapore and to be abroad to live on my own for the next few years. I was also looking forward to begin my course in Information Technology and Communication at Informatics Academy. Little did I know that God had His own reason for bringing me to Singapore.

Generally, I would say that I am a good person; striving to be moral in my ways but that was where it ended. I didn't want to get too involved with God because I thought it would be very hard to walk with Him as a young person. I had this idea of how I thought my walk with God is supposed to be like. If that was the way I should be walking, I felt that I was just not good enough to do it; I felt unworthy of the call.

While at school we were invited to join ICF. I didn't respond at first, but after a few months I started attending the meetings but stayed as passive as I could. However, I found that my interest in God started to increase, and with each CF meeting, the interest grew even more, until it was no longer an interest but a hunger.

I am indeed grateful for the love that the Lord has showered on me that caused me to run after Him and learn His true ways. I have learnt a lot during my time here in Singapore. Now, as I have completed my studies, I look forward with anticipation to what the Lord will manifest through all of us when we return to our home country. These two and a half years in Singapore has really been an exciting life-changing experience for me, and I am thankful that I was given this beautiful gift.

I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone that has helped to make our stay in Singapore so wonderful. There would be too many if I start enumerating them.

May the good Lord bless you all and expand our ministries in Jesus name. Amen.

May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us; establish the work of our hands for us – yes, establish the work of our hands.

– Psalm 90:17

Prayer Points

Pray:

- for them as they adjust back to life in their home country and as they re-integrate to church life/find a suitable church to belong to. Pray especially for them to find support networks that will help them to continue growing spiritually.
- that God will lead them to take up jobs where they can continue to shine for Him.
- for the future direction of ICF ministry. As all of us have returned to Nigeria, there are no members remaining. Pray for the FES staffworkers as they explore other opportunities of ministry.

Boma Tam Dennis / ICF Chairman / 2013 graduate in Information Technology and Communication, Informatics Academy.

A Hunger for God

ICF Retreat in October 2013

NP CCF

It has been an eventful year for **NP CCF (Ngee Ann Polytechnic Chinese Christian Fellowship)** thus far, through the first half of the 2013/2014 academic year. With different activities such as Bible studies, bonding activities, talks, and sharings, we were able to grow closer to each other and to God. With our vision, *Being relationally attached to God's Word, spreading God's love*, the activities planned were based on the intention of going deeper into the word of God and showing the love of God to the people around us. In addition to these activities, we collaborated with the English section in an act of showing love and blessing to the school, by giving out files containing words of encouragement to students before the start of the examinations.

Praise the Lord!

Challenges faced

While the year was eventful and enjoyable, we faced several challenges too. One distinct problem was the demographics of our committee. Although the committee is large, with 12 members, only three are second year students and the rest are final year students. This put much stress on the committee as final year students have an increased school workload. All of us also have to balance between school, CF responsibilities, church commitments, family and for some, internship/ industrial attachments.

Photo:
Back row, left to right: Nicholas Wee, Yu Hai Wan (NP Alumni) Lim Zhi Jing (NP Fresh Graduate) Donna Vong, Fong Qi Hua. Front row, left to right: Katherine Lai, Joyce (Staffworker)

Prayer Points

- We thank God for His valuable guidance and the many blessings He has showered upon us. During this time, we have been grounded and moulded in many ways. Though it was not easy, it was, is and will always be a joy to serve our Lord.

- In the upcoming months, many activities still await us, such as the gospel rally, the selection of new committee members for the next academic year, the annual general meeting and organising different camps. Do keep us in your prayers as we continue to be light and salt on campus.

Nicholas Wee / NP CCF Chairman / Ngee Ann Polytechnic, Psychology and Community Services Year 2

NYP CCF

Bonding Day

Shalom! **NYP CCF (Nanyang Polytechnic Chinese Christian Fellowship)** is a fellowship based upon God's grace. We have 17 members in total, with an average attendance of 9 persons at our regular meetings, which include Bible study sessions, topical messages, a Bonding Day, devotional time and sharing of thoughts. Occasionally after a gathering, we will stay back for refreshments and mingle around to get to know each other better.

The theme of our CF this year is *Building up in unity, proclaiming the name of Christ*. We hope that we can build up and edify each other both in our spiritual life and the fellowship of the saints, as well as be a testimony to our neighbours, illuminating the love of Christ. We are thankful that our members are getting along well and have been able to learn through the Scriptures. God has also provided a venue for us to have our meetings. We are ever grateful for the constant intercession and help from our graduates and the CFs from other polytechnics.

And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap a harvest, if we do not give up.
– Galatians 6:9

Challenges faced

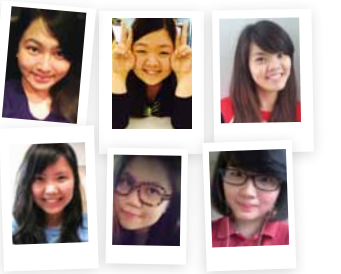
Of course, we do face certain difficulties in this ministry. There are limitations to what we can do especially in the area of publicity. Furthermore, our average attendance is still meagre, making it hard for us to form a satisfactory committee. May the Lord continue to provide us with strength and the resources to face these challenges.

Regina Au / NYP CCF Chair / Nanyang Polytechnic, Diploma in Nursing Year 3

Prayer Points

Dear brothers and sisters, do pray for our CF:

- for more students to join this fellowship and be committed to it.
- for our Executive Committee to gain wisdom from God and be able to submit under the will of God while serving, and thus help our fellow students to be salt and light for Christ.



Top row left: Regina with NYP CCF Exco 2013

NTU ISCF

NTU ISCF (Indonesian Students' Christian Fellowship) has just celebrated, in September, its 15 years of journey with the Lord (yay!!). We are thankful that God has guided and provided for us thus far. He has added many new family members to us this academic year (21 newbies to be exact), and it is very encouraging to those in the Executive Committee (Exco) to know that this fellowship is growing in numbers. Currently, we have around 80 members who are divided into about 20 cell groups. We hope we can grow not only in numbers, but also in our spirituality and love toward Christ, our beloved Saviour.

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.
–1 Corinthians 15:58

Challenges faced

As the number of members in the Exco has decreased, we distributed some of the essential workload to the remaining members. One of the more important tasks was to decide the theme of each gathering, followed by contacting the speakers. At first, we were uncertain whether the method we chose would work and would be able to solve our problem. Thank God that after a couple of meetings, we managed to set the themes for this semester.

This year, NTU ISCF aims to become a caring fellowship, within and outside our fellowship. In the past year, we have observed some beginning signs of spiritual apathy. It is a great loss for us, as a more matured fellowship, to have a lack of desire to serve and give our time and energy for His work on campus. In an attempt to address this, we have organised some activities that support our focus for this year, such as community service and 'showers of blessings' (praying for students around NTU nearing the exam period).

Photo:
NTU ISCF Exco (from left to right): Johan, Irving (ASW), Noah, David, Levi, Albert, Lucia (Vice-President), Darryl (staffworker), Adhi (President). Not in picture: Nathaniel

Prayer Points

Pray for:

- the newly formed cell group members to be able to meet regularly, and grow spiritually. Pray that each of the leaders will persevere during this period as the cell groups are still new.

- the senior members to grow spiritually and live out our faith in our day-to-day life, and be a good witness of Christ.

- the Exco team to set an example of living out our spirituality and not be weary in the process. Pray for His grace so that we shall not be distracted with the 'tasks and routines' and forget to do His work.

- God to give the right persons to do His work according His plan with prayer and humility.

Lucia / NTU ISCF Vice-President / NTU, Mechanical EngineeringYear 3

Welcome Tea August 2013

Your Kingdom Come

By Vinoth Ramachandra

FES Singapore 2013

Your Kingdom Come was first published by FES Singapore in 1987 (under the title *Thy Kingdom Come*) as a transcription of three expository sermons delivered by Dr Vinoth Ramachandra, at the IFES East Asia Regional Conference in Hong Kong in 1986. The talks dealt with the Kingdom of God in relation to Jesus, the Church and Christian hope. In this partially revised edition, Vinoth, who is currently the Secretary for Dialogue and Social Engagement IFES, has updated some of the illustrations and statistics used in the original talks. Other than these minor changes, the messages remain the same and continue to be a challenge to Christian students and graduates today, in whatever context they are in.

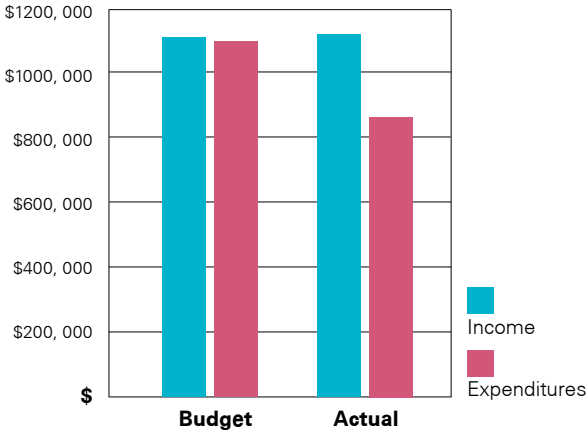
This monograph is available at the FES office.

FES Income and Expenditures 2013 (Jan-Oct)

	Budget	Actual
Income	$ 1,116,280.00	$ 1,118,988.00
Expenditures	$ 1,097,179.20	$ 861,899.00
Surplus/(Deficit)	$ 19,100.80	$ 257,089.00

Notes:

1. FES, including MCF, experienced a consolidated surplus of $257K
2. To date, this financial year has been very heartening. While the income was as per target, ministry expenditures were much lower than budgeted.



PRAYER/POEM

THIS IS WHAT WE ARE ABOUT:

We plant seeds that one day will grow.
We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.
We lay foundations that will need further development.
We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capability.

WE CANNOT DO EVERYTHING,

and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.
This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.
It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.
We are workers, not master builders;
ministers, not messiahs.

WE ARE PROPHETS OF A FUTURE NOT OUR OWN.

Taken from: Shane Claiborne & Jonathan Wilson Hartgrove, Common Prayer Pocket Edition: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals (Zondervan 2012), p. 36-37. Original prayer/poem written by Bishop Ken Untener.

Search me, O God, and know my heart!
Try me and know my thoughts
And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!

Psalm 139: 23,24 (ESV)

Culture and Coherence

Towards Translatability of the Christian Faith in Our Mission

Andrew F. Walls, a renowned missiologist, wrote an insightful book: *The Missionary Movement in Christian History (Orbis Books 1996).* In one chapter, entitled "Culture and Coherence in Christian History", he divides Christian history into six ages: Jewish, Hellenistic-Roman, Barbarian, Western Europe, Colonization, and Cross-Cultural Transmission age.

Walls attempts to describe how Christianity shifts from one centre to another along with its respective historical context and socio-political situation. He concludes that "Christianity … has throughout its history spread outwards, across cultural frontiers, so that each new point on the Christian circumference is a new potential Christian centre." It is like a serial transformation, rather than a steady expansion.

In addition to that, his portrait not only creatively gives us a glimpse to understand the mysterious ways our eternal Triune God is working through the historical actuality and cultural diversity of His church on earth, but also affirms the missional nature of **our Christian faith with its infinite translatability to indigenise itself in various cultures.**

However, ironically the infinite translatability of the Christian faith potentially might not work well across on all grounds. One example argued here is the conversion of the barbarians, which indeed brings up a cogent system of Western Europe Christianity – a sign of successful indigenisation of the Christian faith among the Northern Europe people. Compounded with the Reformation movement, Western Christian culture has become the standard model of Christianity at least in the past five centuries but at the same time sadly serves as the coercive model of Christianity as well.

In other words, the cross-cultural transmission of Christian faith in reality seems halted (or at least significantly blocked) after the Western Europe Christianity was widely considered as the model of Christianity, with its theological and philosophical system. It is arguable that subsequent expansion (the fifth and sixth ages) is just a superficial indigenisation – more for pragmatic purposes of converting the world to Christianity.

Thus, Walls' argument of the infinite translatability of the Christian faith remains to be proven, till we can witness the time when the current southern Christian centres (the Africans, the Asians, and the Pacific people) could demonstrate a **local and indigenous coherence in their expressions of the Christian faith.**

Christianity came to Singapore likely in 1819 together with the Catholic and Protestant missionaries, who brought with them Western Europe Christianity, and arguably we inherit that kind of Christianity till now.

Walls also claims that there is no such thing called "Christian culture" or "Christian civilisation". It is a very bold statement. He believes that the Christian faith is beyond culture, but in historical actuality it is put into the locality transforming culture until it moves, enters, and penetrates another culture. In his interview with *The Christian Century*, Walls elaborates the underlying reason for his claim:

> One must conclude, I think, that there is a certain vulnerability, a fragility, at the heart of Christianity. You might say that this is the vulnerability of the cross. Perhaps the chief theological point is that nobody owns the Christian faith. That is, there is no "Christian civilization" or "Christian culture"… [1]

Therefore, in relation to the above thoughts, I would like to end with some key reflections we must make now as we continue in our mission among students in Singapore:

- How has the translatability of the Christian faith been infinitely expressed in our movement? To what extent is our Singapore or local culture and context put into the foreground?

- Which "Christian culture" do we uphold dearly? In the rising diversity of our student's nationalities, how does it change our ministry approach?

- Moving forward, how could the cross-cultural transmission or indigenisation remain alive and find its way in shaping the way we live out our mission among the students?

Let us think, discuss, and work out together towards the translatability of the Christian faith in our mission!

Lisman Komaladi
/ FES General Secretary

[1] Andrew F. Walls, "The Expansion of Christianity: An Interview with Andrew Walls", *The Christian Century*, 117, no 2 (Aug 2-9, 2000): 792

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FES is an interdenominational Christian organisation that seeks to reach, nurture and equip tertiary students in Singapore to be a faithful evangelical witness on campus and in society, making and building disciples of Jesus Christ who will be effective salt and light of the world.

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